

November 21st · The Birth of Americanism

The Anniversary of The Signing of the Mayflower Compact


In 1620 the Pilgrims, persecuted for conscience's sake, "braved the tempests of the vast and furious ocean and the terrors lurking in the American wilderness" to plant their State of Freedom. Even before landing they set up their government by a written Compact; the first charter of a government of the people, by the people and for the people known to history. In the cabin of the Mayflower humanity recovered its rights. I am now going to read to you this venerable document, the first American State paper. In due respect I ask you all to rise and remain standing while it is being read.

The Compact

IN THE NAME OF GOD, AMEN. We whose names are underwritten, the loyal subjects of our dread sovereign Lord, King James, by the grace of God, of Great Britain, France and Ireland King, Defender of the Faith, etc.

Having undertaken, for the glory of God, and advancement of the Christian faith and honor of our King and Country, a voyage to plant the first colony in the northern parts of Virginia, do by these presents, solemnly and mutually in the presence of God, and one of another, covenant and combine ourselves together into a civil body politic, for our better ordering and preservation and furtherance of the ends aforesaid; and by virtue hereof to enact, constitute and frame such just and equal laws, ordinances, acts, constitutions and offices, from time to time, as shall be thought most meet and convenient for the general good of the Colony: unto which we promise all due submission and obedience.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF we have hereunder subscribed our names at Cape Cod, the 11 of November, in the year of the reign of our sovereign Lord King James; of England, France and Ireland the eighteenth, and of Scotland the fifty-fourth. Ano. Dom. 1620.



§† John Carver,
§† William Bradford,
§† Edward Winslow,
§† William Brewster,
§† Isaac Allerton,
§† Myles Standish,
* John Alden,
§ Samuel Fuller,
‡ Christopher Martin,
†† William Mullins,
§†† William White,

* Richard Warren,
* John Howland,
†† Stephen Hopkins,
†† Edward Tilly,
†† John Tilly,
§ Francis Cooke,
§† Thomas Rogers,
§†† Thomas Tinker,
†† John Rigdale,
†† Edward Fuller,

§†† John Turner,
‡ Francis Eaton,
†† James Chilton,
§† John Crackston,
† John Billington,
§† Moses Fletcher,
§† John Goodman,
§† Degory Priest,
§† Thomas Williams,
Gilbert Winslow,

† Edmond Margeson,
* Peter Brown,
† Richard Britteridge,
* George Soule,
† Richard Clarke,
Richard Gardiner,
† John Allerton,
§† Thomas English,
* Edward Doty,
Edward Leister.

Thus these men became the first Americans who believed that God created all men equal; therefore, **without other precedent** they made all men equal before the Law. Here was the birth of popular constitutional liberty, foreshadowing our Declaration of Independence and our American Constitution, which guarantees Freedom to all of us today. Tremendous suffering was endured as they grappled with the great unknown. Half their number perished in the struggle of that first terrible Winter. On the sarcophagus, which contains their remains, is this inscription:

"This monument marks the first burying-ground in Plymouth of the Passengers of the Mayflower. Here, under cover of darkness, the fast dwindling Company laid their dead; levelling the earth above them lest the Indians should learn how many were the graves.

READER, History records no nobler venture for Faith and Freedom than that of this Pilgrim band. In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger and cold, they laid the foundations of a State wherein every man, through countless ages, should have liberty to worship God in his own way. May their example inspire thee to do thy part in perpetuating and spreading, throughout the World, the lofty Ideals of our Republic."

(Note: November 21st. of our Calendar is the same as November 11th. of the Old Style Calendar.)

* Has descendants. ‡ Brought wife. § From Leyden. † Died first winter.

Presented by the Society of Mayflower Descendants

